



## Musical and emotional attunement: unique and essential in music therapy with children on the autism spectrum

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role of systemic models of music therapy in bridging the sociocultural and health factors of inpatient to community contexts.

**Keywords** Youth mental health; services; recovery

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## How does the present research crisis affect music therapy?

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During the last decade, fundamental methodological issues have been identified in scientific disciplines related to music therapy. One major challenge was found in the extremely low falsification rates of empirical findings in so-called “soft sciences”, such as psychology, psychiatry, and clinical medicine. Moreover, researchers failed to replicate previously reported results, especially in psychology. Therefore, the question arises whether the same situation applies to music therapy research. How many replication studies exist in music therapy? Within the framework of evidence-based medicine, music therapy research has grown largely during the last two decades. With approximately 20 meta-analytical studies, the level of scientific evidence is the most comprehensive among all creative and arts-based therapeutic approaches. But what happens elsewhere? Is an evidence-based approach to the evaluation of interventions an undisputed fundament? Is it sufficient to scientifically assess whether standardized interventions are more effective on average than alternative control treatments for preselected patients diagnosed with a certain disease? The movement of personalized medicine, on contrary, doubts that. This contribution points out that there are many unsolved challenges, and that both present and future generations of music therapy researchers need to reflect the issues created by the existing health-care paradigms.

**Keywords** Music therapy; research crisis; evidence-based approaches; personalized medicine

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## Musical and emotional attunement: unique and essential in music therapy with children on the autism spectrum

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**Background:** In improvisational music therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), facilitating musical and emotional attunement has been found to be one of the unique and essential principles.

**Methods:** Using videotaped sequences of therapy sessions from an international study (TIME-A), independent raters assessed therapists' competence in using their behaviour and expression (e.g. through music, voice, arousal level, movement and facial expression) to allow for moments of synchronisation and attunement. Sequences with frequent

occurrences of attunement were then examined in relation to musical parameters, aspects of timing in the interaction, joint vitality forms and emotional expression.

**Discussion:** Attunement unfolds in different ways, including regulation, selective attunement and gentle redirections of the dynamic in order to regulate the child's arousal, attention or mood. Both attunement to the child's vitality forms and selective attunement can be seen as essential for music therapy in ASD. They allow for joint changes in time and thereby possible steps towards early forms of joint attention.

**Keywords** Improvisation; autism spectrum; attunement; vitality forms

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## Repetition in music therapy

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**Introduction:** Repetition is a central phenomenon in music therapy practice – we repeat songs, rhythms, bodily actions, and verbal phrases. This is true for music therapy across different areas of practice. Still, in the discipline of music therapy, repetitions are seldom described in depth. In this paper, however, this important phenomenon is the center of attention. The presentation is part of a PhD project, now in its concluding stage, and will describe the project's methodology and selected findings.

**Methodology:** The research project is a qualitative instrumental multiple case study, including music therapy with a child with autism, music therapy with an elderly person with dementia, and music therapy with an adult person with a schizophrenia-like disorder. The empirical material comprises video recordings of music therapy sessions and interviews with the music therapists involved. Each case was analyzed separately, and the study concluded with a cross-case analysis.

**Findings:** The presentation concentrates on findings from the cross-case analysis. This includes a discussion on how a resource-oriented perspective on music therapy affects the interpretation of repetition. The concept of *slow music therapy* is put forward, where repetition is understood as a way of influencing our experience of time. The balance between repetition and difference is also a central theme.

**Keywords** Repetition; difference; slow music therapy; resource-oriented perspective

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## “How intense is this silence?” A multiple method study investigating music therapy for young children with selective mutism

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